

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3377

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

S E C R E T HONG KONG 00456

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, US

SUBJECT: PRC HINTS AT POSSIBLE FLEXIBILITY ON TAIWAN

QUESTION

1. AN ARTICLE BY THE THEORETICAL STUDY GROUP OF THE PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY, IN EXTOLLING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRMIER CHOU TO CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY, REFERES TO A CHINESE NEGOTIATING POSITION ON TAIWAN DATING BACK TO THE MID-1950'S, POSSIBLY HINTING AT SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE. THE ARTICLE, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN PEOPLE'S DAILY JANUARY 11 AND FRONT PAGED IN BOTH HONG KONG COMMUNIST DAILIES TODAY IS A LENGTHLY COMPENDIUM OF CHOU'S FOREIGN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS DATING BACK TO THE FOUNDING OF THE PRC, AND AT SEVERAL POINTS EMPLOYS RATHER STRIDENT ANTI-US LANGUAGE. IN DISCUSSING THE UNITED STATES, HOWEVER, THE PRINCIPLE THRUST IS PEKING'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE SINO-U.S. RELATIONS.

2. ONE SECTION, ENTITLED "SOLEMNLY ANNOUNCES WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE US LEADING TO THE SINO-US AMBASSADORIAL TALKS". AFTER DENOUNCING US "OCCUPATION" OF TAIWAN AND RESTATING PRC OPPOSITION TO ANY FORM OF TWO-CHINA SOLUTION, STATES, "BUT CONCERNING THE DISPUTE BETWEEN CHINA AND SECRET

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THE UNITED STATES CAUSED BY US OCCUPATION OF TAIWAN, WE HAVE REPEATEDLY PROPOSED THAT THIS BE RESOLVED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT THE USE OF FORCE". THIS IS A PHRASE- RARELY SEEN IN RECENT YEARS, WHICH DATES BACK TO THE MID-1950'S AND THE SINO-US AMBASSADORIAL TALKS WHICH AT THAT TIME WERE INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS ON A POSSIBEL AGREEMENT CONCERNING THE NON-USE OF FORCE (FOR EXAMPLE, THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 8, 1955 AND FEBRU-

ARY 9, 1956).

3. CLEARLY THE REFERENCE TO "WITHOUT THE USE OF FORCE" IS NOT INTENDED TO IMPLY THAT THE PRC IS WILLING TO RENOUNCE THE USE OF MILITARY MEANS TO "LIBERATE" TAIWAN. PEKING HAS CONSISTENTLY MADE A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE DISPUTE INVOLVING THE PRC AND TAIWAN, AN INTERNAL QUESTION, AND THE DISPUTE OVER TAIWAN INVOLVING THE PRC AND THE US. AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM. IT IS ONLY IN THE LATTER CONTEXT THAT THE OFFER APPLIES. NEVERTHELESS, THE REACHING AGREEMENT ON THE NON-USE OF FORCE, AN AGREEMENT WHICH THE US CLEARLY INTENDED TO HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR TAIWAN. THE NEGOTIATIONS ULTIMATELY FAILED (DUE AS MUCH TO US INFLEXIBILITY AS CHINESE AS WE RECALL), BUT THE RENEWED MENTION OF THIS EARLIER CHINESE POSITION COULD SUGGEST AN AVENUE WORTH CONSIDERING AGAIN.

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